TRANSREPORT

AUGUST 2007

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE BOSTON REGION METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

MORTON STREET STATION RENOVATIONS
Page 2

GOVERNOR'S GUIDELINES FOR TRANSPORTATION AGENCIES
Page 2

MASSACHUSETTS MOBILITY COMPACT
Page 3

MPO ACTIVITIES
Page 3

MEETING CALENDAR

For the most recent information on the following public meetings and others that may have been scheduled after TRANSREPORT *went to press, go to www.bostonmpo.org or call (617) 973-7119.*

AT THE STATE TRANSPORTATION BUILDING, 10 PARK PLAZA, BOSTON

August 2 (Thursday)

Boston Region MPO Transportation Planning and Programming Committee. *Conference Room 4.* 10:00 AM

Immediately followed by:

Boston Region MPO. *Conference Room 4.*

MBTA Urban Ring Citizens Advisory Committee. *Conference Rooms 2 and 3.* 4:00 to 6:00 PM

August 8 (Wednesday)

Regional Transportation Advisory Council Freight Committee. *Conference Room 4.* 1:00 PM

Regional Transportation Advisory Council. *Conference Room 4.* 3:00 PM

August 15 (Wednesday)

State Bicycle Plan Board. *Executive Office of Transportation and Public Works Conference Room 1, Suite 3150.* 1:00 to 3:00 PM

August 16 (Thursday)

Boston Region MPO Transportation Planning and Programming

Calendar continued on p. 2

A New Vision for Transportation Policy in Massachusetts

GOVERNOR PATRICK SETS GUIDELINES FOR TRANSPORTATION AGENCIES

Marking a new approach to transportation policy in Massachusetts, Bernard Cohen, Secretary of Transportation and Public Works (EOT), announced in July the six guiding principles that Governor Deval Patrick has outlined for the state's transportation agencies. The announcement signals a policy shift from previous administrations and provides insight into issues that the administration aims to address through changes in the way state transportation agencies do business.

EOT will oversee the state's process toward the following aims:

- Aligning transportation initiatives with environmental goals
- Improving coordination among agencies and improving transparency
- Improving project delivery
- Fostering economic growth through enhancements and modernization of the transportation system

• Policy *cont. on p. 2*

Planning Documents Released to Public

DRAFT FFYs 2008—2011 STIP LIST

The Executive Office of Transportation and Public Works (EOT) has released the draft project listings for the federal fiscal years (FFYs) 2008—2011 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) for public review. The STIP is a compilation of the 13 regional Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs) prepared annually by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' 10 Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and the regional planning agencies of Franklin County, Martha's Vineyard, and Nantucket.

The draft STIP can be obtained on EOT's Web site, www.mass.gov/eot. The public review

• STIP *cont. on p. 2*

DRAFT FFY 2008 UPWP

The Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization's Transportation Planning and Programming Committee has released the draft FFY 2008 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) for public review.

The draft UPWP contains information on federally funded transportation studies and planning activities proposed for the upcoming year. In addition to ongoing work, the MPO has proposed two new activities.

The MPO plans to conduct the second phase of the Route 2/Alewife Brook Parkway study, which would determine if new bus routes or adjustments to existing routes could improve

• UPWP *cont. on p. 4*

Still Time to Join Bike Parking Program

Cities and towns are invited to participate in the MPO's Regional Bike Parking Program, an innovative program launched last November to increase bicycle parking facilities in the region. The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) and the Executive Office of Transportation and Public Works (EOT), both members of the MPO, are managing the program.

The MPO has made a commitment to encouraging bicycling as an important means of transportation. Convenient and secure bicycle parking is a necessary component for making it

• Bike Racks *cont. on p. 4*

The members of the Boston Region MPO: Executive Office of Transportation, Cities of Boston, Newton, Salem, and Somerville, Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration, Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority Advisory Board, Massachusetts Highway Department, Massachusetts Port Authority, Massachusetts Turnpike Authority, Metropolitan Area Planning Council, Regional Transportation Advisory Council, Towns of Bedford, Framingham, and Hopkinton

Mattapan's Morton Street Commuter Rail Station Receives Overhaul

FIRST PHASE OF FAIRMOUNT LINE IMPROVEMENTS COMPLETED

The first phase of the $37 million project to improve the Fairmount commuter rail line was completed on July 17 and celebrated with a ribbon-cutting ceremony at the newly renovated Morton Street Station. Secretary of Transportation and Public Works Bernard Cohen, MBTA General Manager Daniel Grabauskas, and Boston Mayor Thomas Menino were present to mark the occasion and announce the improvements that have made the station safer and more accessible to Mattapan residents.

Morton Street Station on the Fairmount commuter rail line.

The $6.8 million renovations to Morton Street Station involved accessibility improvements, including the addition of high-level train platforms, pedestrian-friendly walkways, and access ramps. New comfort amenities, such as benches, and steel canopies and windscreens for weather protection, were installed. Electronic message boards and improved signage were also added. To address residents' concerns about safety, the station now features a new lighting system and MBTA police call boxes.

In addition to the Morton Street Station improvements, the Fairmount project includes a redesign of the Uphams Corner Station, and improvements to bridges, tracks, and the signal system along the Fairmount line. This line is the only commuter rail line that serves Boston's urban core.

Patrick Administration Sets New Guidelines for Agencies

● Policy *cont. from p. 1*

- Addressing the shortfall in transportation funding and restoring financial stability
- Addressing perceived geographic inequities in the funding of transportation projects and services across the state

This guidance notes that the state's transportation policies have implications for the economic and environmental well-being of the commonwealth, and that transportation policies should address issues of public concern such as security and climate change.

As the transportation system is a major emitter of greenhouse gases, attention will be given to reducing congestion, improving air quality, promoting the use of fuel-efficient vehicles, improving transit, and increasing bicyclist and pedestrian access to the transportation system.

Accomplishing these aims calls for restructuring the operations of the state's transportation agencies to improve coordination among agencies that have traditionally operated independently. Also, the processes for planning and constructing transportation projects will be reviewed, and possibly revised, to speed up project delivery time.

These changes will occur in the context of a daunting $15 billion to $19 billion shortfall of funds needed to maintain the system over the next 20 years, as identified by the Transportation Finance Commission. Nevertheless, in a departure from the previous administration's Fix-It-First policy, the Patrick administration is emphasizing that system expansion should not be off the table. Expansion will be an important factor in the state's economic development by providing transportation links for residents to have access to jobs and schools, and for shipping. There will be a public process, after the Transportation Finance Commission releases its recommendations, to determine ways to close the funding gap.

Calendar cont. from p. 1

Committee. *Conference Rooms 2 and 3.* 10:00 AM

Immediately followed by:

Boston Region MPO. *Conference Rooms 2 and 3.*

August 22 (Wednesday)

Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA. *Conference Room 2.* 1:00 PM

August 27 (Monday)

MBTA Rider Oversight Committee. *Conference Rooms 1, 2, and 3.* 5:00 to 7:00 PM.

September 6 (Thursday)

Boston Region MPO Transportation Planning and Programming Committee. *Conference Room 4.* 10:00 AM

Immediately followed by:

Boston Region MPO. *Conference Room 4.*

AT OTHER BOSTON AREA LOCATIONS

August 8 (Wednesday)

MBTA Senior and Transportation Access Pass. *Salem Council on Aging, 5 Broad Street, Salem.* 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM

August 15 (Wednesday)

Unified Planning Work Program Workshop. *Boston Public Library, McKim Room, 700 Boylston Street, Boston.* 12:00 to 1:30 PM

August 16 (Thursday)

MBTA Senior and Transportation Access Pass. *Hingham Senior Center, 224 Central Street, Hingham.* 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM

August 20 (Monday)

MBTA Senior and Transportation Access Pass. *Sudbury Senior Center, 40 Fairbank Road, Sudbury.* 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM

August 22 (Wednesday)

Unified Planning Work Program Workshop. *Town Hall, Board of Selectmen's Room, 1471 Highland Avenue, Needham.* 6:00 to 7:30 PM

● STIP *cont. from p. 1*

period will end on August 31, 2007. Comments should be sent to Karen Pearson, STIP Coordinator, by e-mail at Karen.Pearson@eot.state.ma.us, or by phone at (617) 973-7335.

The final STIP will be available in early October .

State Agencies Sign Mass. Mobility Compact

Governor Deval Patrick and nine state transportation agencies signed a compact designed to improve the delivery of transportation services in Massachusetts by enhancing interagency communication and cooperation in the planning, design, construction, and operation of transportation services.

"Critical infrastructure decisions in the commonwealth have too often been made in silos, costing residents time and money," said Patrick, who signed the executive order establishing the compact on July 17. "The Massachusetts Mobility Compact will move our transportation systems forward by improving communication among the leaders of these agencies, and making all of us more accountable."

The compact, which will be coordinated by Secretary of Transportation and Public Works Bernard Cohen, aims to:

- Increase mobility for people and goods, across and through the commonwealth in a safe and efficient manner
- Promote and adopt administrative efficiency and program improvement initiatives between and among transportation agencies and authorities
- Share best practice techniques for implementation across transportation modes

The agencies that signed the compact were the Executive Office of Transportation and Public Works, Department of Conservation and Recreation, Massachusetts Highway Department, Massachusetts Turnpike Authority, Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, Massachusetts Port Authority, Massachusetts Aeronautics Commission,

• Compact *cont. on p. 4*

Boston Region MPO Activities

BOSTON REGION MPO ACTION ITEMS

The MPO's Transportation Planning and Programming Committee released the draft federal fiscal year (FFY) 2008 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) for public review (see page 1). In response to comments from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the MPO also voted to adopt revisions to JOURNEY TO 2030, the 25-year transportation plan for the region, which the MPO approved in April. In addition, following a public review period on its Public Participation Program, the MPO considered comments from the public, FHWA, and focus group participants as it revised this program. The revised program is available on the MPO's Web site, www.bostonmpo.org. Throughout the month of July, the MPO also accepted public comments on the draft FFYs 2008—2011 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and an amendment to the FFY 2007 element of the FFYs 2007—2010 TIP. These comments will be considered by the MPO when it votes on the documents in August.

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL UPDATE

Kristin Decas, executive director for the New Bedford Harbor Commission, delivered a presentation at the July meeting regarding that city's existing intermodal capabilities and the economic potential of the port. In addition to commercial fishing, the city accommodates break-bulk shipping, passenger ferries and cruises, transient recreational vessels, and short sea shipping from east-coast and international ports. Decas focused on the potential to generate more short sea shipping opportunities, given highway congestion throughout the Northeast Corridor and subsequent delays in truck-carrier freight. A stronger New Bedford port could benefit the region by complementing rather than competing against the services and accommodations offered in the ports of Boston, Salem, and Gloucester.

The Advisory Council's Storrow Drive Tunnel Committee presented a draft letter weighing options being considered by the Department of Conservation and Recreation for the rehabilitation of the Storrow Drive eastbound tunnel. Instead of supporting one of the options previously developed, the Advisory Council agreed to identify issues from the project's draft environmental impact report and offer solutions for their mitigation.

ACCESS ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE MBTA (AACT) UPDATE

At the July meeting, Gary Talbot, the MBTA's new Assistant General Manager for Systemwide Accessibility, announced his goal of improving accessibility on all elements of the MBTA system in a timely manner. Talbot sits on the United States Access Board, which is responsible for writing the federal accessibility standards for the nation. He can be contacted at (617) 222-3200 or at GTalbot@mbta .com.

Staff from the Office for Transportation Access continue to visit senior centers to register customers for Senior/TAP/Blind Access CharlieCards (see calendar).

Effective July 14, North Station became a designated RIDE pickup/drop-off location. THE RIDE now picks up customers at the parking lot accessed via Lomasney Way at the rear of the Tip O'Neill Federal Building.

UPWP Comment Period Open

• UPWP *cont. from p. 1*

access to transit and increase bus ridership by drawing commuters who would normally drive through Cambridge.

The UPWP also includes a proposal for reserving $300,000 as an initial set-aside for a regional household survey. The survey would cost a total of $2 million. If fully funded by the addition of MPO funds and contributions from other sources, the survey would gather data on individuals' travel patterns in the region. The data would be incorporated into the MPO's travel model, which the MPO and other agencies and entities use for planning transportation projects and services.

The UPWP's public comment period began July 31, and will close at 5:00 PM on August 29. Written comments must be received by the MPO, addressed to Secretary Bernard Cohen, MPO Chair, at the address below on or before the 29th.

Members of the public are invited to attend two MPO-sponsored workshops that will be held to provide information on the draft UPWP (see calendar). An MPO meeting to take action on the UPWP is currently scheduled for September 6 at the State Transportation Building (see calendar). Members of the public may attend.

The draft document may be obtained on the MPO Web site, www.bostonmpo.org, or by contacting the MPO by mail at 10 Park Plaza, Suite 2150, Boston 02116-3968; voice at (617) 973-7100; TTY at (617) 973-7089; fax at (617) 973-8855; or e-mail at public information@bostonmpo.org. Copies are available in CD, printed, or accessible formats.

Agencies Join Compact

• Compact *cont. from p. 3*

Registry of Motor Vehicles, and Massachusetts Association of Regional Transit Authorities.

"At a time when our state's transportation infrastructure is deteriorating and funding is falling short of our needs, working together to find efficiencies and savings is a critical step," Cohen said.

The agencies have already established several working groups that will focus on information technology sharing, green technologies, energy effiency, and asset management. A Transportation Security Roundtable has also been formed to review coordination on security issues. The agencies will address issues of safety and congestion in the future.

Bike Racks

• Bike Racks *cont. from p. 1*

possible for more people to travel by bicycle. Program participants may order bicycle racks directly from vendors with whom MAPC has negotiated group purchasing contracts, and be reimbursed for the entire purchase cost of eligible bicycle racks with federal funds allocated by the MPO and matched by EOT.

For more information, visit MAPC's Web site, www.mapc.org/transportation/bike_parkingprogram/intro.html, or contact Barbara Lucas, MAPC's Manager of Transportation Planning, at (617) 451-2770 or blucas@mapc.org.

TRANSREPORT

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